

Story 1839 (1969 Tape 3)

Narrator: Müslim Yarar

Location: Alıcık village,
Bayburt kaza,
Gümüşhane Province

Some time after taping
of this tale, Bayburt
became the capital city
of a new province of
the same name.

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Recorded by Dr. Saim Sakaoglu

Settling Two Birds' Divorce Suit

Once there was and once there was not a padishah whose wife had been unable to bear him a son. In order to take the padishah's mind off his problem, his vizier said to him one day, "My padishah, let us go and walk around in your garden." While the two men were walking about, four birds flew into the garden and perched in one of the trees. Two of the birds began to chirp back and forth to each other, but the other two birds remained completely silent and looked very sad.

After the birds had flown away, the padishah said to his vizier, "Now I have two problems. I have my old problem of childlessness, and now I have a new problem. I am overcome with curiosity about what those two birds were talking about, and I am determined to

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satisfy that curiosity. I want you to find someone who can understand bird language. If you can find such a person within forty days, that will be fine, but if you cannot find such a person in that time, I shall have you beheaded.”

“All right, my padishah,” said the vizier, and he set forth immediately to find someone who could understand bird language. He traveled to this place, he traveled to that place, but nowhere could he find anyone who could understand the speech of birds.

As the thirty-ninth day was passing, the vizier stopped searching. He turned around and started home. While he sat resting at a wayside fountain, the vizier saw a very old man approaching. The old man asked, “Oh, son, what are you doing here?”

“I am resting,” answered the vizier. “I was searching for something, but I was unable to find it. As a result of my failure, I must return to the palace of the padishah to be beheaded.”

The old man asked, “What was it that you were looking for?”

“Ah, do you wish to share my problem? Is that why you are asking me about it?”

“Perhaps. Now tell me about your problem.”

“One day when our padishah was very sad about a problem that he had, I suggested that he and I take a walk in his garden. While we were walking, four birds flew into the garden and perched in a tree.

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Two of the birds began chirping to each other, and it seemed as if they were carrying on a conversation. Since neither of us could understand what the birds were saying, my padishah said that he now had two problems, not just one. His second problem was his great curiosity to know what the birds had been talking about. He then ordered me to find a person who could understand bird language. If I could do so in forty days, all would go well for me, but if I could not find such a person in that time, I would be beheaded. I have searched everywhere that I could in order to find such a person, but I failed to find one. Now I am returning to be beheaded."

The old man then said to the vizier, "The only person who can understand bird language is Mehmet Bey, the son of the padishah of Yemen."

But the vizier answered, "Even if I know that now, how can I get him to Istanbul in time to save my head? I have only one day left."

"Of course you cannot take Mehmet Bey to your padishah by tomorrow," said the old man. Then he added, "I thought that only intelligent people became viziers, but I realize now that they sometimes let stupid people hold that office! Even if you could get to Yemen that fast, do you think that the padishah of that land would allow you to take Mehmet Bey with you?"

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“Yes, you are right,” answered the vizier. He then traveled back to the palace. There he said to the ruler, “Oh, my padishah, I have located a man who can speak bird language, but it will require your authority to bring him here. Your arm is far longer than mine. The son of the padishah of Yemen is a man who knows the language of birds.”

The padishah of Istanbul said, “All right,” and he immediately sent a corps of soldiers to Yemen.

When those troops arrived in that land, they surrounded the capital city. They then sent a message to the ruler, saying, “The soldiers of the padishah of Istanbul have surrounded your city. They want to take your son, Mehmet Bey, to Istanbul.”

When he received that message, the padishah of Yemen said to his attendants, “Go and ask the commander of those troops just what it is that they want of Mehmet Bey.”

The attendants went to the commander and asked him, “Exactly why do you wish to take Mehmet Bey to Istanbul?”

The commander answered, “Because the padishah of Istanbul needs the help of that clever young man.”

But the padishah of Yemen responded, “I have only one son, Mehmet Bey, and I cannot have another child. I cannot, therefore, give him to the padishah of Istanbul. If he wishes to engage us in war over this matter, we shall fight, but I cannot give my son to him.”

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The commander then sent this message: "Blessings upon you, O padishah! Because both padishahs are Turks, they should not fight against each other. Why don't you ask Mehmet Bey if he would like to go to Istanbul? If he himself should want to go, then that might solve the problem.'

When Mehmet Bey was asked this question, he said, "If I cannot travel while my father is still alive, then when could I do so? Of course I should like to go to Istanbul, and if my father grants his permission, I shall do that." When this was reported to the padishah of Yemen, he agreed to send his son to Istanbul.

Shortly after Mehmet Bey had arrived at the palace in Istanbul, the padishah said, "Let us go to my garden and walk around in it for awhile." In just a few minutes, the same four birds, which had been coming there every day for more than a month, arrived in the garden and perched in a tree. As usual, only two of these birds spoke. They were talking to each other, "Ci, ci, ci, ci, ci."

After this conversation between the two birds had gone on for some time, the padishah of Istanbul asked Mehmet Bey, "What are they talking about?"

Mehmet Bey answered, "The first bird which spoke is the father of the two silent birds. He was talking with his wife, the mother of the two silent birds. The mother and father will soon separate, and

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he wants to have the children. He said, 'Ask the padishah of Istanbul about our problem. Let him decide who should get the children.'"

When the padishah heard this, he said, "Tell them that the children belong to the father.

But now the mother, speaking through Mehmet Bey, objected. She said, "My padishah, when my children were very young, before they had even learned to fly, my husband said that we should migrate to another country. I said that we should not do that, for our children were still too young to make such a trip. He then said that we should leave the children behind, but I told him that I could not do that. He left, but I stayed here to rear the children, not without many difficulties. Now he comes here and claims that the children are his and that should give them to him.

The padishah then responded through Mehmet Bey, "Oh-h-h-h, in view of these facts in the case, I shall reverse my judgment and declare that the children belong to the mother."

The two children and the mother now embraced each other and flew away. The father bird, departing in another direction, flew to another country.¹

¹This is not a well-told story. Only the second of the padishah's two problems is resolved. The first problem, his childlessness, is never mentioned as such after the first paragraph.

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[NOTE: The character of Mehmet Bey links this story with the one that follows: No. 1840. Except for that linkage, however, the **tales have no connection.**]